

MISSOURI CONSERVATIONIST

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Serving Nature & You



Vantage Point

GOING ONCE, GOING TWICE, ...SOLD!

Have you ever wondered what happens to all the equipment used by the State of Missouri when it reaches the end of its useful life? By state law it is deemed surplus property and must be disposed of, usually by sale, and the proceeds are to be deposited back into the account from which it was paid. This state law allows the Department of Conservation to sell its surplus property to the public and deposit the proceeds back into the Department's account to be used again.

Every year the Department collects the equipment (vehicles, boats, motors, computers, mowers, tractors) and brings it to one of two locations to hold a public auction. These auctions are normally in Brookfield and Salem. The MDC auctions are much like any auction you would find in your community on any given weekend. The public registers to get a bid number, the equipment is put together in lots and an auctioneer spends three to four hours barking out numbers most of us don't understand.

The Department takes great pride in taking care of the equipment that is afforded us and it shows by the response that we get at these auctions. This past October in Salem there were approximately 1,000 registered bidders from nearly every county in Missouri and also from six surrounding states, including Arkansas, Illinois, Tennessee, Kentucky, Oklahoma and Iowa taking part in the most-of-the-day event. Some went home the proud owners of a newly acquired used piece of equipment. Most went home with only the memories of what might have been had they only raised their hand one more time. Everyone went home with the enjoyment of the heart-pounding, fast-paced excitement of being at the auction.

In most years MDC sells between \$750,000 and \$1,000,000 worth of used equipment. This money is then put back into the Department's account to use in taking care of public lands and programs. Of the amount received from the sales, the biggest portion comes from vehicles. There are approximately 125 vehicles sold each year. Most will have between 105,000 and 120,000 miles



NOPPADOL PAOTHONG

on them. Even with that many miles, we are able to recoup 40 to 50 percent of what was paid for the vehicle four or five years before. In the end, the Department has efficiently used these vehicles, maintained them at a high standard and then passed them along to a new owner while many enjoyable miles were still left. One lucky bidder from Dent County purchased a truck eight years ago at an MDC auction. They put an additional 85,000 miles on the 100,000-mile truck before they decided it was time for a "new" truck. They managed to get the truck they wanted, and paid much less than expected.

How does MDC determine the best time to sell a vehicle? There are many studies by national organizations that have differing opinions. It is our belief that the taxpayers of Missouri are best served when we sell these vehicles before they reach 120,000 miles. At this time we are able to say the vehicle has been used efficiently and based on all expenses we have the lowest per mile usage cost. In other words, we are trying to get the best bang for your bucks. The same set of standards applies to any piece of equipment that is used and eventually sold by the Department.

Next August and October, be looking for the notices for the Missouri Department of Conservation surplus auctions. Even if you don't go home with something, you are guaranteed to have an enjoyable day with many other auction enthusiasts.

Carter Campbell, Administrative Services Division Administrator



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Reflections

SATISFIED SUBSCRIBERS

I just wanted to thank your subscription department for the time they spent working with me on an ongoing subscription problem.

Since June, our high-school library has been having a problem getting our three monthly copies of the *Conservationist*. I called them and I have been contacted monthly to see if our magazines have come. Each time we didn't receive our copies they were mailed in a special envelope.

Finally, it seems that our problem has been resolved and I just wanted you to know what a great job your subscription department did in helping me with our subscription.

**Sheri Dodds, librarian
Butler Jr./Sr. High School**

Editor's note: Our circulation staff is always happy to investigate and correct subscription problems. However, we often have no way of knowing if

you're not receiving your magazine. Please contact us if you miss issues.

EXOTICS AND EDUCATORS

I do hope that Jeff Briggler and Joan McKee find time to reflect on words written in their article "Invader Alert!", maybe in haste, and apologize to Missouri educators. I strongly believe that most educators who take the trouble of maintaining live animals in the classroom probably are doing so to teach ethical treatment of animals and various science concepts...including environmental concerns.

I am aware of ignorance in all sectors and understand the need to educate people of all ages to not release exotics. I rather doubt that teachers are the culprits to blame for the increasing numbers of exotic species.

**Trish Smith, via Internet
Life Science, Warrensburg Middle School**

Editor's note: We agree with Ms.

Smith that most educators strive to teach ethical treatment of animals and environmental concerns when teaching scientific concepts. We are glad she is one of those people. However, the exotic African clawed frog is marketed to educators to teach metamorphosis and it is important to warn children and educators that they need to take special care with exotic species. The article also states that many of these frogs escaped from or were released from labs or by pet owners.

Teachers who want to learn more about using native species to teach metamorphosis can request the free publication Raising Tadpoles, which tells how to legally collect and use native species in the classroom. For more information about the threat of exotic species, please ask for the free publication African Clawed Frogs—Keep Them Out of Missouri Waters! E-mail requests to pubstaff@mdc.mo.gov or write to MDC Free Publications, (publication name), P.O. Box 180, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0180.

MARKING TERRITORY

I read the article "CP33 pays" in the January issue and have some concern about the insert map in green on page 17. If the map goes by area codes as it appears, then someone needs to look at another map!

Dennis Millam, Clinton

Editor's note: The regional map is not based on area codes, though some of the boundaries are similar. The divisions take into account land and water characteristics, the distribution of human populations and the practical requirements of providing services to meet local needs. Each regional office serves a group of counties with similar requirements and is staffed by experts in forestry, fisheries, wildlife, law enforcement and natural history. Regional offices are convenient start-



FISHY MISSIONS AND FRIENDS IN FAR PLACES

Kyle Lacy of Hartsburg is serving in Afghanistan. His job includes building infrastructure such as roads, schools and recently, a fish farm. Lacy says his team is trying to increase calories and protein in the local diet. A lifelong reader of the *Conservationist* and an avid hunter, he most misses his wife, his six children and deer season.

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MOVING? DON'T LEAVE US BEHIND!

We would hate for you to miss an issue of the *Conservationist* due to an address change. Call, write or e-mail us to keep your information up to date. Not only will you continue to receive exciting updates on fish, forest and wildlife conservation in Missouri, you'll help us reduce spending on returned mail.

You can reach our circulation office by calling 573/522-4115, ext. 3856 or 3249; by sending e-mail to subscriptions@mdc.mo.gov, or by writing to us at P.O. Box 180, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0180. We look forward to hearing from you.

ing points for Missourians to obtain access to all of the Department's resources.

A PLEASING PORTRAIT

I'm a new subscriber to *Missouri Conservationist* magazine and a former writer/editor. What a splendid representative for Missouri the magazine is!

The photography is always outstanding, but I gasped when I turned to "Portrait of a Predator" in the Feb. '06 issue. Stunning layout...a close encounter with one of the handsomest of Almighty God's creatures. Thank you to the *Conservationist* staff for all your hard work.

Margaret Kraeuchi, St. Louis

The letters printed here reflect readers' opinions about the Conservationist and its contents. Space limitations prevent us from printing all letters, but we welcome signed comments from our readers. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Ask the Ombudsman



Q: I have a Heritage Card that I need to upgrade because I've moved. The permits I'm getting have the wrong address.

A: MDC relies on your address information to contact you for surveys, managed hunt notification, etc., so accurate address information is important.

Basic hunting and fishing permits are valid from March 1 through the end of the following February. When you buy your permit the permit vendor can update your address and personal information. Please be sure to advise the permit vendor that a change is needed.

If you need to update your record at another time during the year, you can contact any MDC regional office or the general headquarters and provide the current information.

For more information on permits, please see Chapter 5 of the Wildlife Code at sos.mo.gov/adrules/csr/current/3csr/3csr.asp.

Ombudsman Ken Drenon will respond to your questions, suggestions or complaints concerning Conservation Department programs. Write him at P.O. Box 180, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0180, call him at 573/522-4115, ext. 3848, or e-mail him at Ken.Drenon@mdc.mo.gov.



JIM RATHER

Purple Martin Mania

Purple martin survival depends on gracious—and tenacious—human landlords. by John Miller

Like many purple martin enthusiasts, I was introduced to these beautiful swallows by my grandfather, who anxiously watched in spring for the return of “his” birds.

As some grandfathers do, mine harbored a few myths about purple martins. One that he kept repeating was that martins always return on Good Friday, give or take a few days.

The arrival of purple martins (*Progne subis*) from wintering grounds in South America is fairly consistent throughout their range. Scouts usually show up in southern Missouri in early March. When they arrive, however, also depends on the weather. Favorable conditions for the return of the martins and the variable date for Good Friday may simply have coincided enough times to convince Grandpa. That’s usually how myths are born.

I’ve heard many myths about purple martins. Probably the most widely believed myth is that purple martins are voracious consumers of mosquitoes. Scientific studies don’t support this belief. No ornithological research has ever found that mosquitoes comprise more than 3 percent of a martin’s diet.





JIM RATHERT

People believe purple martins only eat mosquitoes, but the birds usually target insects that fly higher in the air.

That makes sense. Like all swallows, purple martins eat airborne insects entirely on the wing, but martins tend to feed high in the sky while mosquitoes remain close to the ground. Martins also feed during daylight, while mosquitoes are most active at night.

Purple martins, which are the largest of our swallows, measuring 7 1/2 inches with a wingspan of 13 inches, do eat a variety of other flying pests such as Japanese beetles and spotted cucumber beetles. They also consume several water-borne insect species, including mayflies, damselflies and large dragonflies. This may explain why martins are less numerous in forested mountain regions, including parts of the Ozarks.

Apartment Dwellers

Purple martins are the only wild bird species largely dependent on human-provided housing. It's safe to say

that if "landlords" took down all the martin houses and gourd racks, the species would suffer.

American Indians manipulated purple martins in the East to abandon tree holes for hollowed-out gourds. Early colonists adopted the custom and added houses to the mix.

Colonies of purple martins exist in most communities and rural yards in Missouri, but they tend to be more numerous in the southern half of the state.

The greater population in southern Missouri is probably due to more martin housing on boat docks and marinas around Missouri's reservoirs. Martins love a house near water, although they will readily colonize open sites in yards. Southern Missouri also offers many hospitable landlords along rural roads and in small communities.

Super Colony

Camden County is home to what may be Missouri's largest colony—131 active pairs last season. The birds nest in a combination of aluminum houses, manufactured PVC gourds and an elevated rack of nest compartments made from reconditioned mailboxes.

This "super colony," maintained by Cheri Warner, is about 12 miles north of Richland. Students from nearby Crocker Elementary School visit the site often on summer field trips.

Standing in front of a noisy colony, you might conclude that there are a lot of purple martins. But, you may be looking at the only colony of birds for miles.

That's the case in St. Louis City, where the population is primarily limited to a small colony at the Missouri Botanical Garden, a second one at a nearby restaurant parking lot, and to seven to eight pairs recently attracted to new housing in Forest Park. Together, all of those colonies probably contain fewer than 30 pairs of martins.

In the northern half of their range—generally the states north of Missouri—and in pockets of the southeast United States, purple martin numbers have been declining since about 1960. Pressure from European starlings and English house sparrows likely is contributing to the decline. Both species successfully compete with purple martins for nesting sites.

Many experts believe we have only about 10 percent of the number of purple martins that was present in the 1800s. There's little old survey data to compare, but in notes dated February 1821, John James Audubon wrote in New Orleans of "prodigious flocks moving over the city...I walked under one of them with ease for upwards of two miles."

Simply Enchanting

Why do so many people love purple martins? Even passionate landlords have a hard time answering.

Purple martins are enchanting. Watching these birds soar, bank and dive is mesmerizing. They chirp loudly and seem to delight in one another's company.

Migration for purple martins is a drawn-out affair. Last season, one experienced landlord in Webb City reported that a male martin arrived on Feb. 24, well ahead of my grandfather's schedule. The bird was likely a senior traveler; older birds tend to arrive earlier.

Although many martins arrive in Missouri in March, the bulk of many colonies—mostly 2-year-old birds—lag behind until early April.

One-year-old birds, called sub adults, arrive in late April and well into May. "Subbie" males lack the steel-blue to purple color of 2-year-old males. They resemble females but have patches of dark about the nape of the neck.

Sub adults are more easily attracted to new sites. A sub male may hang out for several weeks at a new site trying to lure in females, which are more finicky house hunters.

Pairs construct a flat nest of straw and spongy plant stems, sometimes adding a mud dam at the entrance. They line the nest bowl with green leaves. They refresh those leaves often to cover the eggs when the female is out feeding.

Broods of older birds fledge around late June, while the broods of sub adults fledge in late July.

Forums for 'em

Purple martins are benefiting from the Internet. Many devoted landlords now turn to online forums for helpful information. One of the most popular is at www.purplemartin.org. It's the site of the Purple Martin Conservation Association (PMCA), a nonprofit advocacy group devoted entirely to purple martins.

Leverett W. Doehring of Villa Ridge in Franklin County, southwest of St. Louis, said information from PMCA forum members helped him grow his colony. Last year, he had 86 pairs with just two vacant compartments.

"A lot of people think you can just put up a house and get martins," Doehring said. "And, you might get a few, but for a colony to grow, you really need to apply some very specific techniques."

Much has changed in the last decade in "martin management." Houses now have deeper compartments to stimulate larger clutches and help protect nestlings from predators, especially owls. Many of them also have specially designed entrances that restrict starlings.

Serious landlords tend to become amateur wildlife biologists, keeping detailed records of purple martin



A busy colony like this one in Camden County that had 131 active pairs last year makes it seem that purple martins are abundant, but martin numbers are declining in Missouri.

LOCATION! LOCATION! LOCATION!

The biggest error you can make when setting out a purple martin house is to put it too close to trees. Open sites, or at least sites with open flyways, attract more martins.

Curiously, martins also seem to prefer nesting in the vicinity of human activity.

Recent findings suggest that the 12-compartment aluminum house with 6-inch by 6-inch rooms that has been widely used since the 1960s is due for a makeover. Experts suggest deepening compartment size to 6 inches by 12 inches. Adding starling-restricting doors is also necessary, because both starlings and martins prefer the deeper compartments.

Many landlords also are putting up natural gourds or those made from PVC. Gourds give martins room and help protect their nests from rain and predators.

Successful landlords invariably suggest aggressive control of starlings and house sparrows. These non-native species are not protected and can be removed by trapping or shooting.

behavior and nesting success. Their diligence will likely result in even more refined techniques for caring for purple martins in the future.

Doehring sat on his deck one evening reviewing notes on egg clutch size, projecting fledging dates, and pondering adding a few more housing units.

"It would be nice to reach 100 pairs," he said. "I just can't imagine sitting out here without them." ▲



JIM RATHER

Great egret



GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY WETLAND INITIATIVE

Fifty years of experience guides the future
of wetland conservation in Missouri

by Gene Gardner

You may think that wetlands are everywhere—after all, they’re scattered throughout our state. Yet more than 87 percent of Missouri’s historic wetlands have been lost through filling, draining or by changing the flow of groundwater.

By the beginning of the 1900s, man had severely reduced Missouri’s wetlands. Improper forest clearing, drainage projects, stream channelization and levee systems that prevented flooding interrupted natural wetland processes. Severe floods filled wetlands with sediment and erosion created deepwater areas.

Why is wetland conservation so important? Wetlands filter pollutants and improve water quality, and they support a diverse population of fish, wildlife and plants with high economic and social value. Many threatened and endangered species are also dependent on wetlands.



Above: Fountain Grove CA was the first waterfowl area developed by the Department. Hunters show off birds taken in a hunt at the area in 1958. Right: Duck Creek CA is managed for migrating birds and outdoor recreationists.

During the last half-century, wetland restoration has focused on increasing habitats, restoring floodplains and managing for a greater diversity of species.

Today, the value of these areas is more apparent because they provide recreation for millions of people through hunting, fishing, boating and wildlife viewing.

Although the Department now manages more than 112,000 acres of diverse wetland habitats throughout the state, the wetland management program had its modest beginnings some 50 years ago. The time has come for us to pause and reflect on our past accomplishments, and to use what we've learned to plan the future of our wetlands. We call this special review our Golden Anniversary Wetland Initiative.

Important From the Start

We wouldn't have the wetlands we do today if not for the foresight of early conservationists.

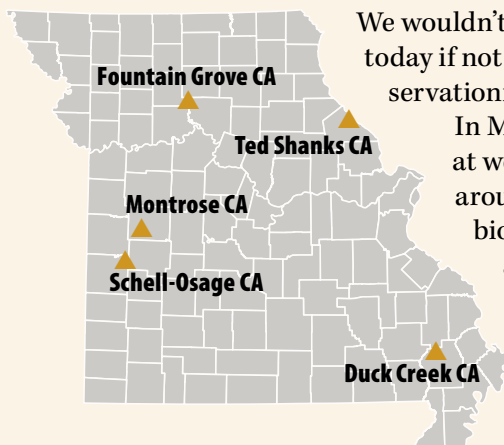
In Missouri, the first attempt at wetland conservation began around 1939, when a handful of biologists served as extension agents for the newly formed Department of Conservation. These agents brought landowners and sportsmen together in a habitat improvement program on



JIM RATHER

private lands called the Cooperative Wildlife Management Program. Establishing wildlife/waterfowl refuges was the Department's only wildlife program in those days.

In 1947, wetland managers began restoring wetlands the only way they knew how, through engineering. Low areas that were formerly wetlands were excavated so they would hold more water. Levees were built, not to keep water out, but to hold water in. Water control structures (valves, screw gates, culverts, etc.) were built so managers could manipulate water levels. Where natural flooding was lacking, pumps were installed to ensure water supplies. These wetland areas, developed by the Department of Conservation,





had a dual purpose that included providing waterfowl hunting opportunities.

Missouri's Oldest Wetland Areas

Fountain Grove Conservation Area in Linn and Livingston counties was the first wetland/waterfowl area developed. An initial land purchase of 3,433 acres in 1947 was followed by others in subsequent decades, resulting in a current conservation area of 7,145 acres. Damage from floods and aging water control structures now requires immediate attention. Some restoration work is already underway, but more work will be needed.

Portions of Ted Shanks Conservation Area,

in Pike county, were originally purchased by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers prior to the completion, in 1940, of the Saverton lock and dam on the Mississippi River. The Department took over management of these lands in 1954. In 1970, four additional tracts of land were purchased, and waterfowl hunting began in 1978. Today, an elevated water table, due to the lock and dam, combined with major floods, has killed most of the bottomland forests on the area. As a result, the wetlands are being invaded by exotic reed canary grass.

Duck Creek Conservation Area, purchased in 1950 to provide hunting opportunities in southeast Missouri, encompasses 6,234 acres. Duck Creek may be the most technically chal-

Wetlands filter pollutants and improve water quality, and they support a diverse population of fish, wildlife and plants.



Above: This trapper was given special permission to remove muskrats at Ted Shanks CA. Managers are combating the invasion of exotic reed canary grass on this wetland.

lenging of the Golden Anniversary projects. Wetland managers struggle to find a balance between providing a premier fishing lake and providing shallow water levels to accommodate thousands of migrating waterfowl and public hunting.

The 3,600-acre Montrose Conservation Area in Henry County centers on a 1600-acre lake that provides cooling water for an electrical generation plant. The Department began managing the area in 1956 as a fishing area, but later as a waterfowl/wetland area. During the late 1960s and through the 1970s, several small auxiliary wetland units were developed around the margins of the lake. These wetland units have trapped over 15 feet of silt in

some portions, creating serious management challenges and limiting public use.

Much of the 8,633-acre Schell-Osage Conservation Area was initially purchased in 1957. Waterfowl hunting began at the area in 1963. In wetter years, management of the Schell-Osage wetlands is complicated by floodwaters from the Harry S. Truman Reservoir that was completed in 1979. Without major renovation wetland management capabilities will continue to be compromised.

The Big Five Turn Fifty

Aging affects us all, and wetlands are no different. The original man-made structures (le-

ing, design and construction technology have vastly improved from the early days. We would build wetlands differently today based on our knowledge and experiences.

Funding the Initiative

Due to the condition of these wetland areas, the Golden Anniversary Wetland Initiative is the Department's top priority for wetland-directed capital improvements. A considerable amount of planning and funding will be dedicated to restorations, ensuring that these five oldest wetland areas will be around for at least another 50 years. Wetland ecologists and managers will join with our conservation partners and public supporters to determine future renovation and management efforts.

Traditionally, funds for wetland conservation were provided through sales of hunting licenses and the "duck stamp," now called the federal migratory bird hunting and conservation stamp, and a federal excise tax on sporting arms and ammunition.

Today, migratory bird hunters continue to support wetland conservation through purchasing permits, the federal migratory bird stamp and by purchasing firearms and ammunition. Ironically, at a time when many waterfowl and other wetland wildlife popula-

Purchases of permits, federal migratory bird stamps, firearms and ammunition support wetland conservation.



CLIFF WHITE

vees, pipes, water control gates, etc.) installed 50 years ago on these five wetland areas have outlived their life expectancy.

Pumps require daily maintenance during seasonal operation and frequent overhauling in between. Levees and dikes are under constant attack by erosion, and burrowing animals (such as muskrats) can cause serious leaks or collapse. In addition, no one could have foreseen the extreme landscape changes and record-setting floods that have continued to impact these older areas.

Fifty years ago, wetland construction was considered cutting edge. However, we know far more about the science of wetland ecology and management today. Even basic engineer-



JIM RATHER



JIM RATHERT

tions are increasing in numbers, the number of hunters is decreasing. In 1970, Missouri had almost 60,000 duck hunters, but 30 years later, slightly more than half that many take to the wetlands. We can no longer expect waterfowl and other migratory bird hunters alone to carry the weight of wetland conservation.

Fortunately, Missouri citizens recognized the need for everyone to contribute support for conservation programs when they passed the 1/8 of 1 percent Design for Conservation sales tax in 1976. Today funding for wetland

conservation and renovation will be the result of the combined efforts of the public, hunters, a long list of conservation organizations, and conservation agencies. If you want to help conserve Missouri's wetlands, consider joining a conservation advocacy group to strengthen your voice for wetland conservation.

We know that wetlands are important to more than just duck hunters in Missouri. During the 2003 Conservation Opinion Survey, 91 percent of Missourians agreed, "It is important for outdoor places to be protected even if you don't plan to visit the



Solitary sandpiper

area.” Almost 70 percent of Missouri’s citizens indicated they enjoy outdoor activities such as “watching birds or wildlife,” and 50 percent “hike in the outdoors.”

Department wetland areas are popular places year-round for wildlife viewing from an automobile or while hiking. Through the Golden Anniversary Wetland Initiative, the Department will continue to work hard to restore wetland areas so that everyone can enjoy them for generations to come. Our passion for wild things and wild places leaves us little choice. ▲



JIM RATHER

Short-billed dowitcher

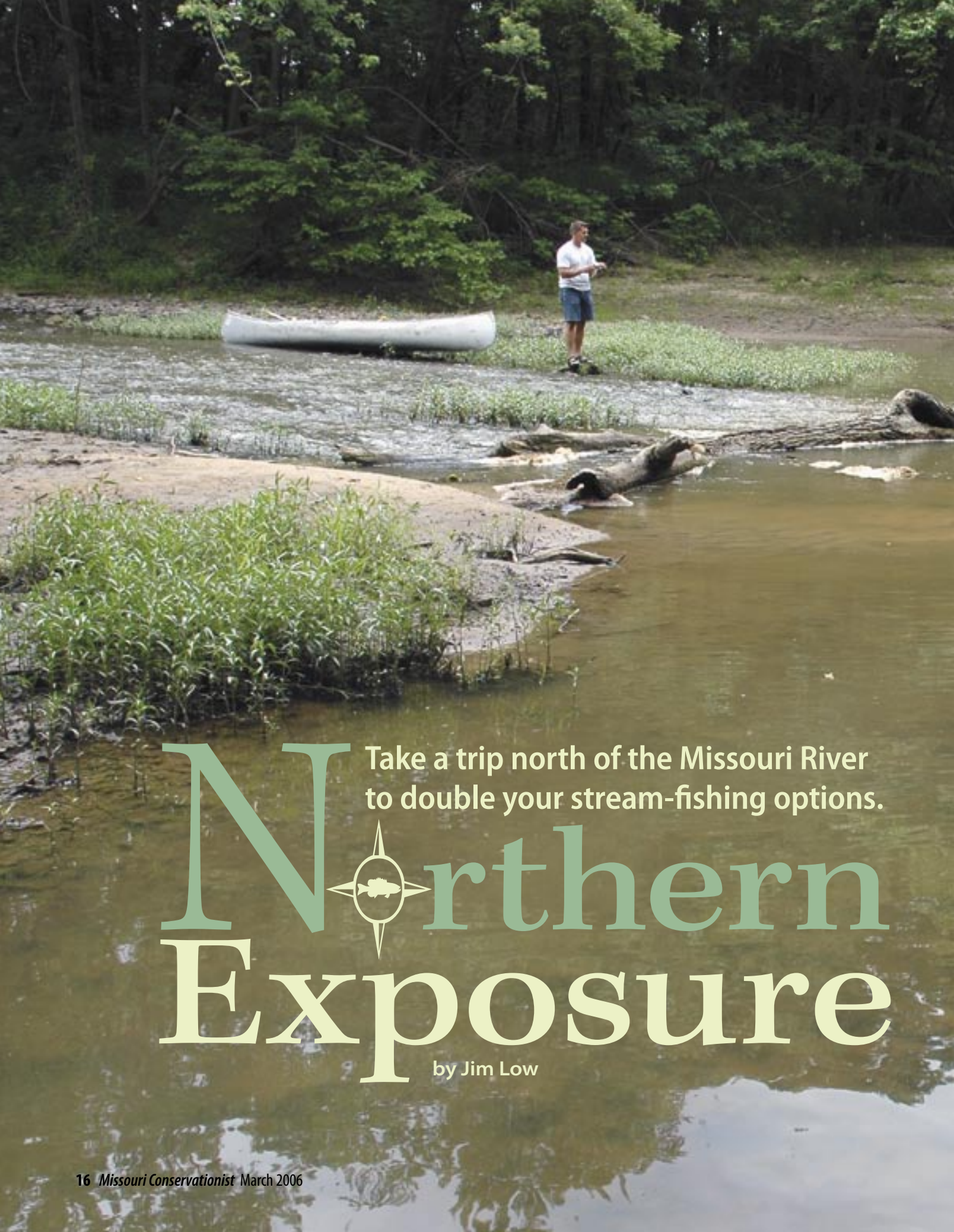
MORE THAN DUCK PONDS

In addition to waterfowl, migrating shorebirds, dowitchers, sandpipers, yellowlegs and hundreds of other wetland-associated wildlife require a variety of wetland habitats.

Some migratory birds require deep, open water. Others require shallow water or just-exposed wet mud flats. Birds migrate at different times and they can have special habitat needs during migration, which can also vary from one year to the next.

Raised hills or mounds in a wetland can increase the attractiveness of the area for shorebirds. Vegetation on these mounds attracts nesting birds. Varying water depths usually results in greater wildlife diversity.

The management of wetlands to ensure that adequate habitats are available to the most number of species presents a big challenge to wetland managers. They must be doing a good job though, because about 64 percent of waterfowl and other wetland-dependent migratory bird species have shown significant increasing long-term population trends due to wetland conservation.



Take a trip north of the Missouri River
to double your stream-fishing options.

Northern Exposure

by Jim Low





JIM LOW



One of the great things about being a writer for the Conservation Department is getting to talk to people about fishing. Anglers love to talk about their favorite fishing holes, and a surprising number will even share their secrets.

Of course, knowing where to fish is the easy part. Like most anglers, I hear about 10 hot spots for every one I actually find time to visit. For years, that was my excuse for not having fished a single stream north of the Missouri River. Also, I grew up on Big Muddy's southern shore and had a host of streams between me and the Arkansas state line; I never felt the need to head north.

Now I know that was a serious mistake.

I owe this newfound knowledge to Travis Moore, a friend and fisheries management biologist who lives in Palmyra. It was hard for me to say no when he persistently invited me to come fish with him. So, I finally gave in and paid him a visit late last May.

I had expected a day of drowning worms in deep, mocha-colored water, hoping to land a few bullheads. When we arrived at Blackhawk Access, I was unprepared to find that the South Fabius (known locally as the "Fabbie") looked much like the gravel-bottomed creeks of the northern Ozarks where I learned to fish. The water had a little more color than I was accustomed to seeing on Bois Brule and Tavern creeks, but this had more to do with weather than the stream's character.

Thanks to one of the driest Mays on record, the Fabius was 2 feet below normal level. This, together with sweltering temperatures, had brought on the bloom of algae that occurs in many Missouri streams in August. That was okay with me. Coaxing fish into gulping artificial lures—my method of choice—is easier when the water has a slight tinge.

The water around the boat ramp reached just above my knees, with deeper pockets

carved out by the current here and there. I recognized those as fish-holding spots, but the first order of business was catching bait.

Travis and three other fishing companions unfurled a small seine net and within half an hour we had collected several dozen small crayfish and minnows. With those, a box of worms and a variety of spinners, crankbaits and jigs, we headed downstream in three canoes.

My second surprise of the day was the rocky riffle our canoes slid into before we were out of sight of the boat ramp. It was the first of many modest rapids that punctuated our trip. There were also small limestone bluffs with bedrock shelves at their feet. I might have been on one of the many southern tributaries of the Missouri River.

Bites were infrequent for the first half mile of our 5-mile float. A handful of channel catfish and freshwater drum measuring 6 to 10 inches fell for minnows, worms and crayfish.

Travis assured me that walleye and sauger haunted this stretch of river. Those species were nowhere to be found, but I was both startled and pleased when a bronze-sided smallmouth bass snatched the tiny crayfish imitation I

Dozens of bass and channel catfish waited where the riffle emptied into a deep pool. Fish competed for the honor of snatching hooks gobbled with worms and drifted beneath plastic bobbers.



Left: Soliciting attention from catfish and bass on the Fabius can be as simple as dangling some worms from a bobber. Top left: Substantial channel catfish are common in these waters. Above: Bring a small seine to catch local bait such as minnows and crayfish.

was casting into remote, rocky pockets along the bank. Over the course of the trip, the tally of smallmouth bass I caught topped the number of largemouths.

The action heated up when we reached the foot of a large riffle, a spot where the river level dropped 3 or 4 feet in 200 yards. Dozens of bass and channel catfish waited where the riffle emptied into a deep pool. Fish competed for the honor of snatching hooks gobbled with worms and drifting beneath plastic bobbers.

I wondered if deep holes like this one harbored larger flathead or channel catfish. As the day progressed, I witnessed a couple of encouraging incidents. Twice, our lines were broken by large but unseen fish that took the hook, then made powerful dives to the log-strewn bottom. The sensation is unmistakable to anyone who has tried to turn a 10-pound catfish on light tackle.

However, the most exciting action came around 5 p.m., as shadows crept across the water. That was when we reached a long, narrow run. The current was too swift to call that stretch a pool, but the water was 6 to 8 feet deep, so you couldn't call it a riffle, either. The



Improve your chances at bank fishing by targeting riffles and the edges of vegetation, such as these water willows.

current had cut a long, slow curve out of a 10-foot dirt bank. Shrubs and vines hung over the water, and tree trunks and root wads festooned the outer curve.

The fish showed a definite preference for night crawlers here, and soon the three canoes were taking turns drifting through the run and catching fish as fast as we could cast, reel in and rebait our hooks.

Several large fish inhaled the offerings—only to snap our lines—which ranged from 4- to 10-pound test. Not all got away, though. Several 1.5 to 2-pound bass and catfish came to hand. We released each one after briefly displaying it for general admiration.

Long before the end of the day, I lost count of the number of fish I had caught. Instead, I began keeping track of the species I had seen. Catfish were most numerous, followed by smallmouth bass, largemouth bass, drum and green sunfish. We caught a single golden redbreast, but I am sure a sucker specialist could have found more.

Looking back on the day as I drove home, I realized that my time on the Fabius had been much more productive than many days I have spent on south-Missouri streams. I resolved to turn my fishing compass 180 degrees from time to time and discover more of the first-class fishing waters between home and the Iowa border. ▲

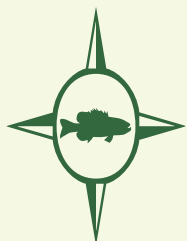
Flathead Fun

For the past six years, fisheries biologists have been tagging flathead catfish in several north-Missouri streams. They are trying to learn more about the number and size of catfish, how fast they grow and where they spend their time.

Anglers who catch flatheads on the Mississippi, South Fabius, Grand, Platte, Lamine, Gasconade, South Grand or Marmaton rivers are encouraged to report their catches and claim cash rewards. Some tags are worth \$10, others \$25.

To qualify for the reward, you need to remove the tag, which consists of two wires and a colored plastic "dangler" tab. The tags are attached just below the fish's dorsal fin. Besides returning the tag, you must report where, when and how the fish was caught and its length. Each tag has a phone number telling where to report the catch.





Northern Missouri Stream Guide

The Fabius River is just one of many beautiful creeks and rivers in the northern half of the state. Here is a partial list of great fishing streams that are closer to Iowa than to Arkansas.

To learn more about conservation areas and accesses in the state, Missouri residents can request a free *Discover Outdoor Missouri* map. The map includes listings of conservation areas with disabled accessible facilities, conservation shooting ranges and Missouri state parks, as well as the amenities on those areas.

To request this item write to MDC, *Discover Outdoor Missouri*, P.O. Box 180, Jefferson City, MO 65102 or e-mail pubstaff@mdc.mo.gov.



STREAM	LOCATION	ACCESSES	TOP FISH SPECIES
The Fabulous Fabius River	Marion, Lewis, Shelby, Clark, Knox & Scotland counties	Soulard, Sunrise, Blackhawk, Dunn Ford, White Oak Bend & Tolona accesses & Deer Ridge Conservation Area	Channel & flathead catfish, smallmouth & largemouth bass, walleye & sauger
The Sensational Salt River	Pike & Ralls	Indian Camp Access & Ted Shanks Conservation Area	Channel & flathead catfish, smallmouth & largemouth bass, walleye & sauger
The Fantastic Four Forks of the Salt River (upstream from Mark Twain Lake)	North Fork Monroe & Shelby counties	Hunnewell & Mound View accesses & Arrow-Wood Conservation Area	Walleye, channel & flathead catfish, smallmouth bass & drum
	Middle Fork Monroe County	Paris & Woodlawn accesses	Walleye, channel & flathead catfish & smallmouth bass
	Elk Fork Monroe County	Cedar Bluff Access & Union Covered Bridge State Historic Site	Crappie, drum, smallmouth bass, walleye, channel & catfish
	South Fork Monroe & Audrain Counties	Santa Fe Access	Walleye, channel & flathead catfish, smallmouth bass, drum & crappie
The Glorious Grand River	Gentry, Daviess, Livingston, Carroll & Chariton counties	Andy Denton, Savage, Wabash Crossing, Green, Holmes Bend, Newman Memorial, Sumner, Bosworth, & Brunswick accesses; Elam Bend, Fountain Grove & Little Compton Lake Conservation Areas.	Channel, flathead & blue catfish, common carp
The Incomparable Cuivre River	Lincoln, Warren, Pike, Montgomery & St. Charles counties	Ashley Access, Cuivre River State Park & Old Monroe boat ramp (private, use fee)	Smallmouth & largemouth bass, channel & flathead catfish, crappie & other panfish
The Plentiful Platte River	Andrew & Buchanan counties	Elrod Mill, Hadorn Bridge, Midway, Rochester Falls, Rock Quarry, Agency, Burton Bridge & Saxton accesses; Happy Holler Lake & Kendzora Conservation Areas	Channel & flathead catfish
The Lovely Locust Creek	Chariton, Linn, Livingston, Putnam & Sullivan counties	Rocky Ford Access, Fountain Grove & Locust Creek Conservation Areas & Pershing State Park	Channel & flathead catfish, carp, buffalo & drum
The Charming Chariton River	Adair, Chariton, Macon, Putnam & Schuyler counties	Archangel, Mullanix Ford, Henry Truitt, Elmer Cook Memorial, Dodd, Price Bridge & Dalton Bottoms accesses & Rebel's Cove Conservation Area	Channel & flathead catfish, carp, buffalo & drum



Why go to Wappapello?

Everyone calls it a crappie lake—
and they mean it as a compliment.

by Tom Cwynar
photos by Cliff White



Fishermen may stretch the truth, but fisheries researchers never do. Fish biologists count and measure fish and tally and survey anglers. They then release their findings without the least bit of exaggeration, or even a wink.

Their conclusion? Wappapello is a great fishing lake that's getting better. The crappie have a predictable baby boom every year, and largemouth bass are growing bigger and bigger.

About 75 percent of anglers who fish Wappapello target those abundant crappie. A nice day in the fall and winter, and almost any kind of day in the spring, will bring a flock of southeast Missouri and St. Louis anglers to the lake.

If it's a week-day, Ron McKuin is among the flock. Because he's retired, he leaves weekend fishing to those he calls "poor fellows who still have to work." His boat is always ready, though, and he's calculated that it takes him 30 minutes to go from the recliner in his home at Poplar Bluff to a boat seat on Wappapello.

McKuin has been fishing Lake Wappapello for more than 30 years. He says the lake's good crappie fishing tugs him away from bass fishing during winter and spring.

He mostly tightlines 1/16-ounce tube jigs around cover with a long jigging pole. McKuin uses only one fishing rod and generally attaches only one color of tube bait to his 1/16-ounce jig.

"I almost exclusively use purple and chartreuse," he said. "Sometimes I'll use pink and white, but my go-to bait has a purple body and a chartreuse tail."

McKuin says he motors around the lake, looking for stumps and logs with his depthfinder.

"In our lake, 10 to 12 feet on the edge of the channel is kind of the magic depth," he said. "I'm usually easing along with my trolling motor trying to find some structure on the bottom that shows some fish around it that I assume and hope to prove are crappie."

He said using only one pole lets him work quietly and efficiently, and the 20-pound test line on his reel lets him straighten jig hooks that get hung up in stumps.

When water begins warming up in the spring, starting about late February or early March, McKuin follows the crappie up into the backs of coves and bays.

Wappapello is a great fishing lake that's getting better.

"Then, I fish with a floater and a jig," he said. "It's amazing that you can tie a jig under that floater no

more than a foot deep and catch nice, big crappie."

McKuin said that during the years he's fished Lake Wappapello, about half of the lake's original stumps have disappeared as water washed sand and dirt away from their roots. He and others are working hard to replace this valuable cover.

"For the fish, a lack of cover is like living in a room with not enough furniture," said Mark Boone, the Conservation Department biologist who manages the fishery at Lake Wappapello. "Stumps, brush piles and that sort of thing are like furniture for fish."

He described how little fish hide in the furniture to avoid predators, and big fish surge from behind the furniture to surprise and capture passing prey.



Creel surveys and fish sampling verify that the combined efforts of the Conservation Department, the Corps of Engineers and local anglers to improve Lake Wappapello's fishing are working. New crappie regulations should help even more.

New Wood

To create more fish furniture, the Conservation Department and the Corps of Engineers, along with members of local fishing clubs, began putting brush in the lake about five years ago.

"The first few years, we put in large, hardwood brush piles all around the lake," Boone said. "We didn't mark any of them, but then, in 2004, we started creating larger brush piles that consisted, on the average, of three loads of large hardwood trees. They're all marked with yellow signs that say 'Fish Attractor.'"

Boone said they used one of the Department's habitat barges to create 22 marked brush piles in 2004 and 16 of them in 2005.

"We are trying to eventually have 80 marked large brush piles around the lake," Boone said. "Once we get them all in, we will go back to the original ones and add more trees to them."

Boone said they place the brush piles from shallow water to deep water so that they will attract fish in all water and weather conditions.

"Anglers can fish up and down until they find fish," Boone said. "They don't need fancy boats with

all kinds of electronics. All they have to do is find a sign, and they'll find the brush."

Anglers are also creating fish habitat on their own. McKuin said the Lake Wappapello Corps of Engineers supports angler efforts to create more fish habitat. Their only requirement is that anglers place the structure where recreational boaters won't be affected.

James Gracey, natural resources team leader at the Lake Wappapello Corps of Engineer's office, said, "We do everything in cooperation with the Department of Conservation to make the fishing better."



The Corps efforts include angler creel surveys, helping with habitat restoration, building a new drive-up fish-cleaning station near their headquarters and adjusting spring-time flows to increase the amount of prey in the lake (see “Applied Shadology”).

Green Growth

Gracey said the Corps is also teaming with the Lake Wappapello Bassmasters fishing club to try to reintroduce vegetation into the lake.

“The old timers say that at one time Wappapello was a highly vegetated lake,” Gracey said. “It had what they call ‘the moss,’ and yancopin (American lotus), and spatterdock in some areas.”



Applied Shadology

Before they are about a year old and 6 inches long, crappies don’t eat shad. Instead, they feed on invertebrates. Until they start feeding on fish, crappie in most Missouri reservoirs grow at about the same rate. Then, their growth rate begins to vary, depending in large part on the availability of shad of the proper size (usually less than one-third of their body length).

From 1987 to 1995, Conservation Department Resource Scientist Paul Michaletz studied shad dynamics in Missouri reservoirs. He found that prolonging the spawning period for gizzard shad makes more small shad available to crappies and other fish during their critical growing time.

Mark Boone, the fisheries management biologist in charge of the Wappapello fishery, said he took what Michaletz learned about how to manage shad and applied it to Wappapello.

“In the past when the water would rise in the spring,” Boone said, “the lake Corps of Engineers would lower it about a half a foot a day, leaving a

lot of shad eggs high and dry.”

He said the Conservation Department and the Corps now regularly consult about lake levels, especially in the spring.

“They do a fantastic job,” Boone said, “Unless the lake gets too high, they try to hold it steady or drop it very, very slowly so that the shad eggs have a chance to hatch.”

Boone said as soon as they started getting more consistent and longer lasting shad spawns at Wappapello crappie started growing faster. The lake also began to shed its reputation as a “stunted bass” lake.

“It used to be, you didn’t see a whole lot of bass over 12 inches,” Boone said. “Once we started getting these better shad spawns, those 10- to 12-inch fish didn’t stop or slow down. They just kept growing.”

Boone said that some question whether research is valuable. “Well, the research that Paul Michaletz did was beneficial,” he said. “Because of it, we have much better growth for bass and white crappie, and a better population of both.”

According to Gracey, spring floods and low winter water levels knocked the plants out and kept them from coming back. He's hopeful the new planting effort will be successful.

As part of the effort, Bassmaster members have been loading pots of lily pads, spatterdock and other varieties of vegetation into their boats and planting them in places where those plants have grown in the past.

"We're trying to put some cover on these mud flats," said Roger Robinson, president of the Lake Wappapello Bassmasters.

Robinson has been fishing the lake since 1954. He remembers when

Bass tournament anglers weigh in more fish at Wappapello than at other lakes on the circuit.

vegetation covered about 20 percent of the lake.

"We still have a lot of bass here," Robinson said, "just not as many of the larger fish as before. Where they used to catch 6- and 7-pounders, now they're catching more pound-and-a-halfers."

According to Robinson, the numbers must be good because bass tournament anglers weigh in more fish at Wappapello than at other lakes on the circuit.

In fact, the large amount of tournament and recreational bass fishing pressure on the lake has caused bass anglers to change tactics. They can't rely on the big, bulky baits that attract bass on other lakes.

"We use a lot of small jigs and finesse worms," Robinson said.

One of Robinson's favorite baits is an artificial centipede on fluorocarbon line with a 3/16-ounce weight. He said that anglers fishing any kind of "rubber" usually choose crawdad colors.

He said lots of anglers throw shad-colored Rattletraps or Bandits, which are small, square-billed crankbaits, and crank them in fast.

"Those school bass get after them pretty good," he said.

Robinson explained that the key to finding bass depends on the time of year. In winter and early spring, the bass usually are holding together near points. Later, they'll spread out and start looking for beds in shallower water.

"After they bed, they'll come back to what we call their summer haunts," he said. "That means deeper water."

"Deep" at Wappapello usually means down to about 15 feet. Robinson said he looks for places where 3- to 4-foot-deep mud flats drop down to a 15-foot-deep river channel.

"By and large, during the summer," he said, "you're fishing for bass that are sitting on those river channels."

Major Microfisheries

Wappapello also offers good opportunities for bluegill and other sunfish. A group of anglers who regularly visit the lake eschew all other species so they can chew on tasty bluegill.

The willingness of Wappapello's white bass to hit small shad-colored crankbaits thrills most anglers, but frustrates serious bass fishermen like Robinson, who said, "They can be fun, but sometimes you just have to get away from them."

His technique for avoiding white bass might help you catch them. He said white bass usually won't chase down a bait the way a bass will. "If you stop it during the retrieve and there are any whites around," he said, "that's when they'll show up."

Anglers also target channel cats and flatheads at Wappapello. Many nice flatheads are taken near the face of the dam and in the backs of coves.

The lake's upper reaches, which more resemble a river, occasionally yield smallmouth bass.

Three C's in Success

It's rare when fishing improves in old reservoirs. A lake that's been around as long as Wappapello (since 1941) accumulates a lot of silt, and the timber and cover habitat left when the lake was created breaks down, reducing the amount of cover available to fish.

Lake Wappapello Profile

- ▲ **Location:** Wayne and Butler counties in southeast Missouri.
- ▲ **Size:** 8,400 acres at recreational pool.
- ▲ **History:** Completed in 1941 as an impoundment of the St. Francis River. Operated by the Corps of Engineers for flood control, hydroelectric power generation and recreational use.
- ▲ **Average depth:** 7.5 feet at recreational pool.
- ▲ **Access:** 26 public boat ramps.
- ▲ **Amenities:** Food, fuel and fishing bait available at nearby marinas, resorts and businesses. Public facilities also cater to swimmers, recreational boaters, hikers, sightseers, hikers and picnickers.
- ▲ **Contacts:** For lake information, including a map of marked fish-attracting structures, go to www.mvs.usace.army.mil/wappapello/. For 24-hour information about Lake Wappapello, call toll-free 877/525-3463 or 877/LAKEINFO.



Anglers looking for fun, family outings or wanting to catch a mess of crappie don't have to ask, "Why go to Wappapello?"

Improving the fishing at Wappapello requires cooperation among three "C's": The Corps of Engineers, which manages the lake; the Conservation Department, which manages the fishery in the lake; and concerned anglers willing to work to help the lake produce more fish.

Anglers are very involved in Wappapello's welfare. More than 200 of them, for example, attended a public meeting concerning new crappie regulations at the lake. It was standing room only at the meeting, and most of the anglers supported imposing a 9-inch length limit, even though it would make catching a limit more difficult.

According to Boone, the new regulation is a good example of

how the Corps, the Conservation Department and anglers are working together to ensure good fishing at Wappapello.

"Anglers first petitioned the Department to put a minimum length limit on crappie and reduce the daily limit," he said. The Corps and the Conservation Department then conducted complementary studies to determine what regulations would work best on the lake.

"We then asked anglers at a public meeting if they would support our recommendations," Boone said.

Nearly 75 percent of anglers favored the 9-inch length limit, and about the same percentage opposed any decrease in the harvest limit.

The new regulations, which go into effect March 1 of this year

(2006), are a compromise. They impose a minimum length limit of 9 inches on crappie from Wappapello but leave the harvest limit at 30.

"It should work," Boone said. "It's not hard to catch 30 crappie now, but it will be more difficult to catch 30 of them longer than 9 inches. Anglers should release more crappie, so we should end up with more and bigger fish."

Bassmaster President Robinson said he remembers when the Corps at Wappapello Lake took the position that they are into water management, and not fishing.

"The people I'm meeting with now," he said, "are saying if there is something they can do to help the fishing as they manage the lake for flood control, why not do it?" ▲



Habitat Hint: Beneficial Blackberries

For saying “I love you,” nothing beats roses. That is just as true for wildlife as it is for your sweetheart. Few plants are more beneficial than the wild cousins of our showy, aromatic domestic roses.

Best-known and best-loved among these hardy and tasty natives is the blackberry. Its succulent fruits sustain wildlife from blue jays to box turtles, not to mention providing the main ingredient of blackberry cobbler.

Blackberry benefits don’t end when the fruits disappear. Dense thickets provide relief from the summer sun and shelter white-throated sparrows, rabbits and other wildlife throughout the winter. Thorny brambles create a fortress against marauding foxes, coyotes, hawks and owls.

One blackberry species native to Missouri, *Rubus allegheniensis*, is the ancestor of many of today’s cultivated varieties. If you find a patch with particularly juicy wild berries, it probably is another native, *Rubus pensilvanicus*. The fruits of Missouri’s third common native, *Rubus argutus*, tend to be seedy and bitter.

If you decide to plant blackberries for your own use, avoid *Rubus bifrons* and *Rubus procerus*. These non-natives can be invasive, crowding out native blackberries and other beneficial plants.

The Grow Native! Web site, www.grownative.org, has a list of commercial suppliers of native plants. Click on “Buyer’s Guide” and then “Retail Garden Centers and Nurseries.”

Forestkeepers share extraordinary tree images online

Tree trunks that look like twining cobras, gnarly knots that look like alien life forms, tree tops that seem to have come from Dr. Seuss books and many other striking images are available for viewing free at the Missouri Forestkeepers’ Web site. The gallery of extraordinary tree images is the result of a friendly competition between Forestkeeper members.

The Conservation Department launched the Forestkeepers program in 1996 to give Missourians the opportunity and knowledge to care for trees, whether they are found in remote forests or urban parks. Members choose their own type and level of involvement, ranging from occasionally checking the health of trees near home to working with trees in their home areas. This wealth of firsthand tree experience brings participants into contact with some of the oddest trees in Missouri. Visit <http://216.119.79.248/treehunt.asp> to see some of the images sent in by members.



GEORGE MORASH



QUAIL ACADEMY SEEKS CADETS, CHAPERONES

Missouri teens can learn why bobwhite quail numbers are at historic lows and what landowners can do to bring them back at the 2006 MO Quail Academy. Teachers can earn free college credit chaperoning the event. There is no time to waste, however. Applications are due by March 15.

The Academy is an intensive, five-day course that focuses on quail management, biology and hunting. Graduates take home all the know-how needed to jump-start quail restoration efforts in their home communities. Teachers who serve as "covey leaders" take the training along with students and earn two hours of college credit.

The academy is a joint effort of the Missouri Department of Conservation and Quail Unlimited. It is open to high school freshmen and sophomores who have a grade-point average of 2.5 or better. Students also must successfully complete a hunter education course beforehand. The academy, including food and lodging, is free.

Two different sessions are available. The first is June 11 through 16 at Central Methodist University in Fayette. The second is June 18 through 23 at Central Missouri State University in Warrensburg.

For more information and application forms, ask a high school guidance counselor, science teacher or vocational agriculture instructor, visit www.missouri-conservation.org/programs/academy/, or call Quail Unlimited Regional Director Jef Hodges, 660/885-7057. Successful applicants will be notified by April 15.

New Quail Unlimited chapter in Mercer County

The Missouri Quail Academy has come full circle with the formation of a new Quail Unlimited chapter by an academy graduate. Keith Beavers, who completed the intensive, week-long training course in 1998, stepped up to be the chairman of the newly founded group.

Thanks to the training he received as a teenager, Beavers understands the habitat changes that have caused the bobwhite quail's decline. He also knows what can be done to turn the situation around. He said he has noticed an increase in quail numbers over the last couple of years and wants to do something to make sure those birds survive.

Josh Michaelis, another of the group's organizers, said he likes Quail Unlimited's ability to bring in matching funds and grants to augment local efforts. He said the Conservation Department's Quail Habitat Initiative will effectively double the money the new chapter can invest in quail habitat.

Anyone interested in the Mercer County chapter can contact Beavers at 660/382-5361 or Josh Michaelis at 214/709-6966. For more information about Quail Unlimited visit www.qu.org.



To learn about bobwhite quail management and Missouri's quail recovery efforts, check out www.missouri-conservation.org
Keyword: quail

West Central QU Chapter leads nation

If the West Central Missouri Chapter of Quail Unlimited (QU) was a cartoon character, it would be Mighty Mouse. For the third year in a row, this tiny group of bobwhite fanatics in Cass County won the National Quail Habitat Award and put every other QU group in the United States to shame.

QU scores all 300 of its chapters by the quail habitat they create. The West Central Missouri Chapter raised only \$3,650 last year, a drop in the bucket compared to large urban chapters that haul in nearly \$150,000 annually. Yet, the West Central Missouri Chapter was far and away the most productive one in the United States in terms of habitat creation.

How do they achieve those results? Instead of focusing on money, they spend a lot of time knocking on doors. They get to know landowners, learn their needs and ambitions and find ways to help them reach their goals while creating places for quail to live.

Chapter Chairman Tom Lampe said QU put up signs touting participating landowners' efforts, and before long neighbors were asking how they could get involved.

QU is observing its 25th anniversary in Missouri. The Show-Me State's first chapter was the third in the nation. To celebrate its silver anniversary here, QU plans a gala event in Kansas City in July. For information about QU, contact Regional Director Jef Hodges, 382 NW Hwy. 18, Clinton, MO 64735, 660/885-7057 or visit www.qu.org.



Tom Lampe



View photos of the damage at Johnson Shut-Ins online

Missourians who are curious about damage to Johnson Shut-Ins State Park can see photos of the area on the Missouri Department of Natural Resources Web site.

The park was swamped in December, when AmerenUE's Upper Taum Sauk Reservoir collapsed, releasing more than a billion gallons of water into the East Fork of the Black River. No one died in the resulting flood, but the torrent swept thousands of trees and countless tons of mud and debris downstream, smothering the park. Raging waters demolished the campground and some buildings and extensively damaged wooden boardwalks and other structures.

The park has been closed to the public while cleanup work takes place due to safety concerns. To let Missourians see the damage and ongoing restoration work, the DNR has created a gallery of dozens of aerial and ground-based photos at www.mostateparks.com/jshutins/pics_main.htm.

State officials are coordinating efforts by AmerenUE to clean up impacted areas, including the Black River, which remains muddy since the disaster. Conservation Department workers are taking part in efforts to assess long-term effects on fish, forests and wildlife.



Prize-winning chef offers venison cooking tips

If you don't like venison, maybe it is because you have never gotten to taste Rodney Carr's corned venison. The St. Louis hunter is the reigning champion of the Missouri Conservation Agents Association's Wild Game, Fish and Nature Harvest Cook Off, held at the Missouri State Fair in Sedalia each August. He says the key to good venison dishes is slow cooking with plenty of moisture.

His corned-venison recipe starts with a large back strap, cut in half. He soaks the meat in brine made with Morton Tender Quick, using package directions. He turns the meat daily and keeps draining and replacing the brine until it stays clear. This takes five to seven days.

After rinsing the meat, he places it in a deep pot and adds six large carrots, four small red potatoes and four medium onions, all cut into large chunks.

Seasoning consists of two or three sprigs of flat-leaf parsley, a large sprig of thyme and a teaspoon of dry English mustard. He adds enough water to cover the ingredients and slowly brings the water to a boil. Then he simmers the meat for two hours.

Next, he cuts a large head of cabbage into quarters or eighths and arranges the pieces around the meat and other vegetables and simmers for two hours longer. The recipe works with venison roasts, but back straps work best.



Wheelin' Sportsmen honors MDC

Officials with national Wheelin' Sportsmen were so impressed with an event for mobility-impaired hunters at Bois D'Arc Conservation Area in 2004, they named the event best in the nation and honored the Conservation Department with a special award.

The Day at the Range had shotgun, rifle, air-gun and archery shooting, fishing for catfish and bluegill and instruction in Dutch oven cooking, making turkey calls from turkey wing bones and other subjects. All were geared to the special needs of hunters and anglers with physical disabilities.

The event took place at the Andy Dalton Shooting Range & Outdoor Education Center. For more information about the Dalton Range's facilities and programs, visit www.missouriconservation.org/areas/ranges/a_dalton/. For information about other Conservation Department shooting ranges and programs, visit www.missouriconservation.org/areas/ranges.

Wheelin' Sportsman is a program of the National Wild Turkey Federation dedicated to providing opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in outdoor activities. For more information, visit www.wheelinsportsmen.org.

Grass pickerel, river redhorse records fall

Missouri has two new pole-line-and-lure fishing records for species that many anglers couldn't even identify. Will Dougherty, Jr., Mill Spring, caught a 1-pound, 3.7-ounce grass pickerel from a farm pond in Wayne County. The toothy, torpedo-shaped fish measured 17.1 inches from nose to tail. John "Buck" Hennessy, Jefferson City, caught a 9-pound, 10.2-ounce river redhorse sucker from the Osage



State record grass pickerel



State record river redhorse sucker

River near the Cole/Osage county line. Hennessy has the distinction of being the only person who currently holds two Missouri state fishing records. The other is for a 5-pound, 1-ounce sauger, which he also landed from the Osage River with a pole, line and lure.

DUCK ZONE WORKSHOPS

Hunters who want a say in the future structure of waterfowl hunting seasons and zones will get their chance at a series of seven public workshops this month. Federal officials allow states to change zones and split-season options every five years. The Conservation Department is currently considering season structure for the 2006–2010 seasons and wants to know hunters' preferences.

Hunters can express their desires at the following meetings. Details about the meetings are available by calling the numbers listed for each meeting or at www.missouriconservation.org.



- ▲ **Columbia**, March 13, 7–9 p.m. at the American Legion Post 202, 600 S. Legion Lane 573/882-8388;
- ▲ **Jackson**, March 15, 7–9 p.m. at the Knights of Columbus Hall, 3305 N. High (also known as Hwy 61 between Jackson and Fruitland) 573/290-5730;
- ▲ **Dexter**, March 16, 7–9 p.m. at the National Guard Armory, Highway 114 East near the airport, 573/290-5730;
- ▲ **Kirkwood**, March 23, 7–9 p.m. at the Powder Valley Conservation Nature Center, 11715 Cragwold Rd., 636/441-4554;
- ▲ **Springfield**, March 28, 7–9 p.m. at the Andy Dalton Shooting Range and Training Center, Green County Farm Rd. 61 (located 2 1/2 miles south of Hwy. 160 West), 417/895-6880;
- ▲ **Lamar**, March 29, 7–9 p.m. at Memorial Hall, 1100 Broadway, 417/884-2526 or 417/895-6880;
- ▲ **Blue Springs**, March 30, 7–9 p.m. at the Burr Oak Woods Conservation Nature Center, 1401 NW Park Rd., 816/655-6250.



Outdoor Calendar

Hunting

	open	close
Coyotes	5/9/05	3/31/06
Crow	11/1/05	3/3/06
Deer Firearms	11/11/06	to be announced
Groundhog	5/15/06	12/15/06
Squirrels	5/27/06	2/15/07
Turkey		
Youth resident only	4/8/06	4/9/06
Spring	4/24/06	5/14/06

Light Goose Conservation Order please see the
Waterfowl Hunting Digest
 or see www.missouriconservation.org/hunt/wtrfowl/info/seasons

Fishing

Black Bass (certain Ozark streams)	5/27/06	2/28/07
impoundments and other streams year round		
Bullfrog	sunset	midnight
	6/30/06	10/31/06
Nongame fish snagging	3/15/06	5/15/06
Paddlefish	3/15/06	4/30/06
Paddlefish on the Mississippi River	3/15/06	5/15/06
Trout Parks	3/1/06	10/31/06

Trapping

Beaver	11/15/05	3/31/06
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For complete information about seasons, limits, methods and restrictions, consult the *Wildlife Code* and the current summaries of "Missouri Hunting and Trapping Regulations" and "Missouri Fishing Regulations," the "Fall Deer and Turkey Hunting Regulations and Information," the "Waterfowl Hunting Digest" and the "Migratory Bird Hunting Digest." This information is on our Web site at www.missouriconservation.org/regs/ and at permit vendors.

The Conservation Department's computerized point-of-sale system allows you to purchase or replace your permits through local vendors or by phone. The toll-free number is 800/392-4115. Allow 10 days for delivery of telephone purchases. To purchase permits online go to www.wildlifelicence.com/mo/.

Kansas City's Blue River Rescue

Kansas City's Blue River is a 41-mile natural oasis running through one of the nation's largest urban forest. It is loved by thousands and, on the first Saturday



in April each year, thousands join The Friends of the Lakeside Nature Center's Project Blue River Rescue to remove trash from the stream. Volunteers of all ages and abilities have taken part in the project, which has taken place on the first

Saturday in April for the past 15 years. For more information, call 816/513-8960, vic@kc.rr.com, or visit www.lakesidenaturecenter.org.

AGENT NOTEBOOK

Three statutes help landowners protect their property against trespass:

569.140 Trespass in the 1st degree is a class B misdemeanor.

A person commits the crime of trespass in the first degree if he knowingly enters unlawfully or knowingly remains unlawfully in a building or inhabitable structure or upon real property.

A person does not commit the crime of trespass in the first degree by entering or remaining upon real property unless the real property is fenced or otherwise enclosed in a manner designed to exclude intruders or as to which notice against trespass is given by: (1) Actual communication to the actor; or (2) Posting in a manner reasonably likely to come to the attention of the intruders.

569.150 Trespass in the second degree is an infraction.

1. A person commits the offense of trespass in the second degree if he enters unlawfully upon real property of another.

569.145 Posting of property against trespassers, purple paint used to mark trees and posts, requirements. Entry on posted property is trespassing in the first degree, a class B misdemeanor.

The owner or lessee of any real property may post the property by identifying purple paint marks on trees or posts around the area to be posted. Each paint mark shall be a vertical line of at least eight inches in length, and the bottom of the mark shall be no less than three feet nor more than five feet high. Such paint marks shall be placed no more than 100 feet apart and shall be readily visible to any person approaching the property. Property so posted is to be considered posted for all purposes.

For further information, contact your local conservation agent.—Kurt Heisler

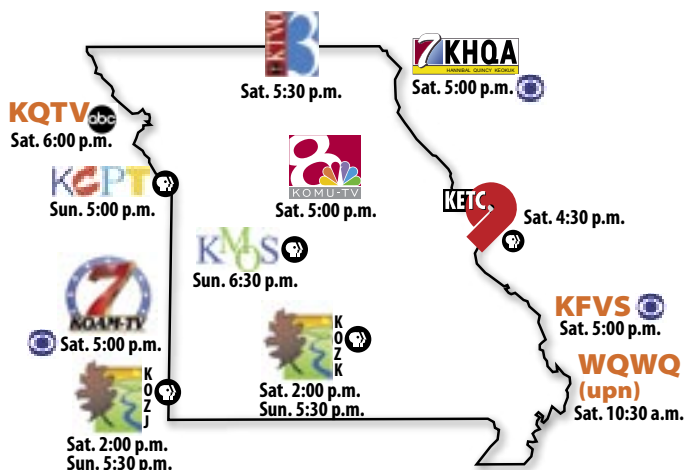


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Program Schedule

Television the way Nature intended!



For additional show information and video clips, be sure to check our web site at <http://mdc4.mdc.mo.gov/tv/>

SHOW SCHEDULE

March 4 & 5—YOUTH TURKEY HUNT

Join the fun and excitement as young hunters venture out during spring turkey season.

March 11 & 12—TROUT FISHING

Tag along for several different trout fishing experiences throughout Missouri.

March 18 & 19—HUNTING

Experience the fun and adventure of hunting, and the importance of safety first.

March 25 & 26—PICKLE SPRINGS

Discover a place in eastern Missouri with unusual rock formations and scenic overlooks.

April 1 & 2—BIRD BANDING

Meet some folks that take an up-close approach to our fine-feathered friends.

OTHER OUTLETS (Previously aired episodes are also shown on the following)

Blue Springs CTV7
Brentwood BTV-10 Brentwood City Television
Columbia Columbia Channel
Hillsboro JCTV
Independence City 7 Cable
Joplin KGCS
Kearney Unite Cable
Parkville GATV
Perryville PVTV
Platte City Unite Cable

Poplar Bluff Poplar Bluff City Cable
Ste. Genevieve Ste. Genevieve Cable
St. Charles SC20 City Cable
St. Louis Charter Cable
St. Louis Cooperating Schools Cable
St. Louis City TV 10
St. Peters St. Peters Cable
Springfield KBLE36/MediaCom
Sullivan Fidelity Cable
West Plains OCTV

Meet Our Contributors



Tom Cwynar is both a writer and an editor for the *Conservationist*. He hails from Michigan, but has lived in Missouri long enough to have enjoyed fishing most of our major reservoirs from what he calls, "The Little Yellow Boat That Could." His primary tools for enjoying the outdoors are a fishing rod, tent and canoe.

Gene Gardner is a wildlife programs supervisor with the Conservation Department. Hailing from the Arkansas Ozarks, his work includes restoring wetlands and other habitats to support a variety of fish and wildlife. He enjoys fishing, hunting and other outdoor activities with his wife, Liz, and daughter, Rachel.



Jim Low learned to fish on the gravel-bottomed creeks of the Ozark Border. He prefers catching smallmouth bass and green sunfish with ultra-light spinning gear to any other type of fishing. Busying his feet with wading and his hands with casting sets his mind free to wander among life's most enchanting mysteries.

John Miller resides in St. Louis where he is a public relations consultant and lifelong purple martin hobbyist. He is working with the St. Louis Department of Parks to attract martins to Forest Park. A member of the Purple Martin Conservation Association, Miller practices hands-on techniques to help colonies thrive.





Blossoming Bloodroot

A bloodroot flower unfurls in late March. It gets its name from orange-red sap in the roots and stem. Bloodroot grows in small patches in moist woodlands.—*Jim Rathert*



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Missouri household*